

# our city's business landscape and storefront design

Washington, DC's distinctive physical structure of avenues, streets, rotaries, squares, parks, open spaces, hills and valleys contribute to a myriad of neighborhoods served by convenient commercial areas that are often just blocks away, a few minutes walk. Each of the city's 39 neighborhood clusters has at least one local commercial area. Though many of these areas are perhaps worthy of historic designation, not all are and not all have been treated with the aesthetic sensitivity that comes with preservation review. As a result, many of the architectural treasures that make our commercial areas distinctive lay hidden beneath years of improper additions and poor maintenance.

As modes of transportation have changed so too have our neighborhood commercial areas and storefronts. Commercial districts once depended upon neighborhood customers who walked the two to three blocks to purchase basic goods and services. These original storefronts were designed with the experience of the pedestrian in mind.

In time, the introduction of trolley lines led to more and bigger signs and other advertising methods that left a number of buildings visually cluttered. Residents were then able to shop frequently in other parts of the city and were not necessarily dependent upon local commercial districts. The advent of cars, trucks, and buses meant that potential customers

were not only moving even faster, but also had local, citywide and regional shopping options. This shift led to local retailers having to compete against national retailers offering lower cost goods in surrounding suburbs.

Subway lines meant that some potential customers were moving with greater ease and speed and were not even above ground at all. However, there has been a renewed interest in central city living and the District's neighborhoods are experiencing new growth and vitality. Residents again want to walk to local businesses for quality goods and services.



REPRESENTATIVE STOREFRONTS THAT ARE IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT (PARKVIEW)

# our neighborhood commercial areas

Generally, Washington's neighborhood commercial areas can be categorized into three (3) broad categories: Corridors, Districts, and Retail Centers.

## Corridors

Corridors are linear business areas that provide some, though not all, local neighborhood services. Many of our corridors are located on highly traveled avenues and streets, and are immediately surrounded by well-established neighborhoods. Parking is typically limited to on-street spaces. Washington has three types of "corridor" business areas: Neighborhood, Corner nodes, and Regional Gateways.

### Neighborhood corridors

Neighborhood corridors are traditionally developed businesses that were established to provide basic goods and services to immediate residential areas

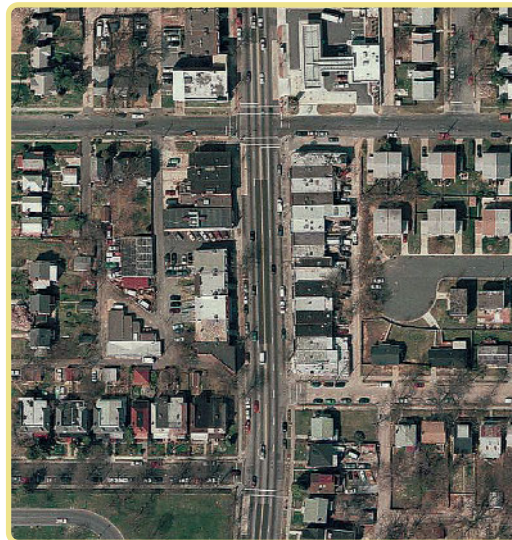
and were once highly dependent upon local foot traffic and the old trolley system. Historic Capitol Hill is an example of a "neighborhood corridor." With the continuing interest in central city living, the range of services and goods provided, as well as the health and vitality of business areas within this category, has become increasingly more important. There are approximately 40 neighborhood corridors around the city.

### Corner nodes

Corner nodes are the conveniently located "mom and pop" businesses that typically number one to four at neighborhood intersections. These businesses remain highly dependent upon local neighborhood patronage. At least 20 intersections in the District have corner stores.

### Regional gateways

Regional gateways are retail areas located on prominent avenues or streets and at key points of vehicular entry into the central city from the region. These areas can benefit from their high traffic volumes, significant visibility and neighborhood and commuter demographics. Both H Street NE and Georgia Avenue from Fern Street to Eastern Avenue in Shepherd Park/Takoma are examples of regional gateways that are primed for revitalization. There are at least eight (8) regional gateways in Washington.



GEORGIA AVENUE 7300 BLOCK, A NEIGHBORHOOD CORRIDOR  
AT A REGIONAL GATEWAY



FOOT TRAFFIC ON PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE (CAPITOL HILL)